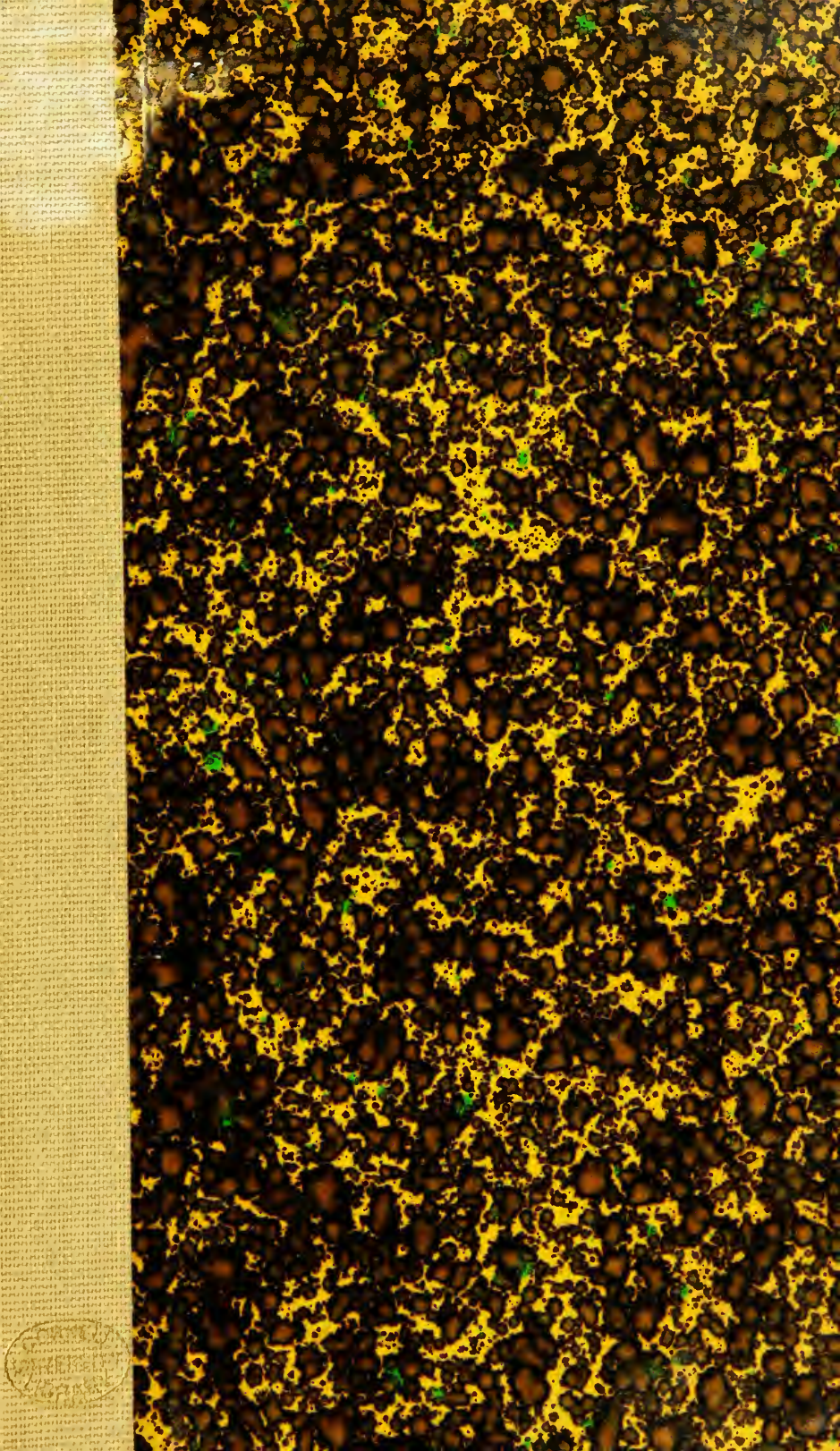




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THOUGHTS
ON
INCLOSING
YANWATH MOOR,
AND
Round Table.

ADDRESSED TO THE CLAIMANTS
THEREON.

~~~~~  
BY THOMAS WILKINSON.  
~~~~~

Penneth: printed by J. Broton.

1812.

Price One Shilling.

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THOUGHTS
ON
INCLOSING
YANWATH MOOR,
 &c. &c.

NEIGHBOURS AND FRIENDS,

PERHAPS it is not unknown to some of you, that my leisure hours, of which I have not many, are sometimes employed with my pen; but I have not often troubled the public with what I had to say. If I have committed my thoughts to paper, they have been mostly written and laid by; you will then wonder that any more pages of mine are again before you: but the subject on which I lately addressed you is now again revived, though, with many others, I had hoped it had been at rest, and it seems at present so interwoven with my mind, that I feel it like an overruling duty to tell you all I know, I have looked back, and I do not remember ever to have misled my neighbours, and they will not censure me if I feel desirous that they should not be misled. The welfare of those among whom I live is dear to me, and I have sometimes left my

own little affairs to promote it ; and however the present struggle may issue, whether my labours of goodwill are attended to or not, though my disposition is for peaceful retirement, yet I trust, while I am able, that I shall never be backward to mingle with my little assistance when it is wanted. If it had been only my own advantage I had been pursuing, I had given it up ere this : if it had been but that of the *present generation*, *perhaps*, I might stop here: but when the present and future inhabitants of my native village, and the villages around me, are, in my view of things, likely to suffer, I may be permitted to do all I can to prevent it. Not wishing to injure the cause of rational inclosing, I was desirous that my former address should be pretty much limited to the claimants on our Common, and I believe very few were sold ; yet its perusal certainly reached beyond the bounds intended, and its reception was such, from those unconnected with the dispute, that it induces a hope, if a bill is presented, we too may appeal to the wisdom of the nation in parliament assembled, and our Guardian Senate will become sensible thereby, of the *littleness* of the object of those who are for inclosing, and the *great* injury it will do to our hitherto peaceful neighbourhood. If I repeat here what has been said before, it will be new to some, and as we are ill judges of our own doings, it may not be amiss so to do ; for whether what was said first or last is best, I do not know. I gave or sent a copy of what I wrote before, to almost every one interested ; from a delicacy in my nature I cannot do so again, for whatever faults I may have, I wish not to intrude on any one.

My subject is dull and sorrowful : and here I will own, with much simplicity, I have some-

times been sad when I mused over it ;—I have seen the seeds of desolation to our villages sown in such measures. Here a train of reasoning springs up in my mind, which, if I was to pursue it, I have no doubt but it would convince many of my readers ; but I will forbear, and only say, these villages are mostly inhabited by those who live on their own property, but if these measures are pursued, and we could come again and take a survey two hundred years hence, we should find it not so—but if they were villages at all, inhabited by a more abject race. I wish well to future generations, though I only belong to this. I have felt as a man, and perhaps a weak one. I have felt as a man would feel amid his falling country ; yet I have felt little for myself, for I hope to walk cheerful and content over my own fields to the end of my days. I have said my subject is dull and sorrowful, and I cannot presume to suppose I shall afford much entertainment to the reader, yet even to that end I may sometimes use my humble endeavours.

Being from home a few weeks in the early part of last summer, several of my neighbours, soon after my return, came to me with expressions of deep concern at some steps which had been taken in my absence, towards inclosing our Common. Now, as on that occasion it is reasonable to suppose, that what was advanced was all on one side, (and every subject has two sides), I wish the other to be considered also. To determine without considering both, would be like a jury giving their verdict when they had heard only the witnesses on one side, which would be unwise and unjust. If, on further consideration, some should be found to alter their sentiments, they need not be ashamed. It is only a proof they are wiser to day than they were

yesterday ; without which progress in knowledge, we had all yet been children. I must own, I have found it at times necessary to alter my opinion, and even to be more earnest on the subject when I have so altered it, lest if I had been the means of misleading any, I should fail of setting them right again. When the subject of Inclosure was first introduced to my consideration, I thought about what steps I should take ; and it appeared to me most open and fair, to commit my thoughts to paper, and lay them before my neighbours, when they might weigh and sift them by their own firesides, and if there was any thing in them that met their approbation, we might then strengthen one another : it might also call forth considerations of their own, and we cannot have too much light on a subject so important as that before us. I think it will appear from the following pages that I am a friend to Inclosures generally ; but having made this acknowledgement, I trust it will be as readily admitted, that general rules have their exceptions, and the Inclosure of *Yanwath Moor* I think one.

In the earliest ages of mankind, earth and air were common to all men : men trod the earth and breathed the air with equal freedom. As society advanced, several parts of the earth were divided, and each man knowing his own, he made it more productive, and thus the earth was rendered capable of supporting more inhabitants. But this dividing of the earth may be carried too far ; certain classes of society possessing themselves of all the land, till there is left but to others the streets, the roads, and the floors of their own cottages, is not having due regard to the poor man and his beast. Looking at the subject in this point of view, I am tempted to ex-

claim somewhat in the language of one of our sweetest poets,

“ Where now, ah where shall Poverty be known
To tread on earth, and say, ‘ this spot’s my own ?’
If to some Common’s fenceless limits stray’d,
He drives his flock to pick the scanty blade,
These fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,
And e’en the bare-worn Common is deny’d.”

Goldsmith.

In writing thus, I want not to raise irritation in the minds of the poor ; I only wish the interests of the poor, and those verging towards poverty, attended to, as well as the rich. To the poor themselves I would say, fellow-islanders, you are better off in Old England, than you would be in any other country in Europe. I will go further, and say, I believe there is no spot on this earth where ten millions of people live so happily together as in *Old England* ; and next to the bounty of Providence, I believe it is in a great degree owing to our happy constitution and the salutary laws under which we live. Good government and good laws (though men do not often think about them in that way), operate unseen, like the blessings of Providence.

A small Common may be compared to the fund of a *Benefit Society*, it deals out with frugality its succour to human wants : but it has some advantages over the fund of a benefit society, and some circumstances peculiar to itself : it took nothing from the pocket of any man to establish it, and requires no future subscriptions for its support. It needs no human interference : if left to itself, it will continue a comfort to the lower classes of society to the end of time ; but if broke up and divided, those who have least occasion will get most of it, and those who have most occasion least ; and it can never

again be established—it is gone for ever. The money laid out in providing for inclosing a Common, like a fortune spent, cannot be recovered ; and when a bill of this sort is passed into a law and carried into execution, it is one of the acts of parliament *that can never be repealed*. Under these considerations, unbiassed judgment and true benevolence will hesitate to lay a hand on a Common like ours.

I have not heard of, and I very much doubt whether in England there is so small a Common with so great a number of claimants, or where a little Common affords such convenient accommodation to the proprietors, as *Yanwath Moor* and its appurtenances. *Yanwath Moor* and its appurtenances extend for two miles, and almost go up to the doors of the houses of four villages. These accommodations commence at the end of the village of Emont Bridge, where the *Round Table* offers its herbage and its easy access to water, to all the neighbouring fields ; but divide it, and the path thereto will be in a crooked direction. The cow is a quiet animal, and likes to help herself uninterrupted, with her grass and her water ; she will not like to travel the same road, and at the same time, with coaches and with carriages, there will perhaps be a mutual interruption ; a coach and a cow will not assimilate well together upon the road, and accidents may occur if they come in contact. *Round Table* is united to *Yanwath Moor* by a broad green lane, up which cattle may pasture. Then *Yanwath Moor* stretches from *Yanwath* to *Tirril* and *Sockbridge*, and a horse or a cow may be on it in a few minutes from the door of its owner, and, on an average, may be sought home again in half an hour. Now, what wise man would surrender these advantages without a manifest

recompence? But I cannot see any thing like an equivalent in prospect. I have frequently heard of other inclosures that had their objects, and such as few would deny but that they were rational. I lately fell into conversation with a person that came from near *Castle-Carrick*: I remember when the appearance of that district was desolate and dreary. He told me their Common was inclosed several years ago, that each claimant thereon got half as much common as his inclosed land; that is, if his estate was forty acres, it is now sixty; besides which, he is released from tythe of corn and hay—all this taken together would be almost doubling his comforts. I must own here, from *principle*, I could have no hand in making a bargain respecting tythes—the reader will wonder: but I will not enter into argument on that question, I have enough before me:—only, to shew that our society is consistent on this subject, I will just mention, that at the same time we are refusing to pay tithes, all our members that have a *claim to receive tithes, refuse to do so*, else they could not continue members. I believe the reader, though he may differ with me on other points, will think this fair.

Yanwath Moor is an open Common of about 100 acres, surrounded by perhaps 1500 or 2000 acres of inclosures, belonging to landholders claiming thereon. If we had a correct plan of it in the midst of these inclosures, its littleness would surprise us. Now I think it an advantage to the community, to have a twentieth part of the land so uninclosed. It is a resource to which the little farmer may have access in time of difficulty: if his small pasture, from unforeseen circumstances, happens to be over-burthened, rather than throw his cattle away at fallen markets, he

can relieve his grassing by a fortnights pasturage on the Common. His less straitened neighbours may there summer their leisure horses. Last evening I counted between twenty and thirty feeding round me (probably there were others feeding, unseen by me): this is certainly a general advantage. The cottager may have a range for his cow, his geese, and his pig, all contributing, with his industry, to rear a young family. At the return of spring, a month or two before the grassings are stinted, many let out their cattle to water, and they feeling the influence of the inviting season, range an hour or two upon the Common, then return invigorated to their stalls: thus the inclosures are preserved from foil. Then, when many go to their grassings, their way is over the Common, and the path is soft to their feet: if the Common was inclosed, the disadvantage of hard roads to heavy cows would then be known. The old inclosures have scarcely any of them water during the summer months, but the Common furnishes an easy approach to that valuable necessity. There is now many fields open to the Common for water and other conveniences, which advantages, in case of inclosure, would be lost to the owners; their value would, of course, be diminished; for we all know, that a field of the same extent and quality adjoining a Common, would let for considerably more, than one locked up by other fields, or to which there was not so commodious access. These, and many more circumstances which might be adduced, ought to be seriously considered. It argues in us a weak or forward mind, to think of only getting up the Common, without taking into consideration the consequences to which it may lead. I would here wish those who are most strenuous

for the measure, seriously to recollect themselves, whether, in the course of their lives, they have not been disappointed of satisfaction from their favourite schemes. It is one thing to caress and carry forward in conversation a favourite idea, and another to reduce it to patient, laborious, and expensive practice. If we embark nobody in our schemes but ourselves, we shall have the fewer to blame us; but the censure of a neighbourhood is a serious thing.

Next to my native village, my neighbours of

EMONT BRIDGE

will allow me to take an interest in their welfare. The village of Emont Bridge, from its situation near the union of two beautiful rivers, the noble banks of these rivers, and the fertility of its surrounding fields, bids fair to rise to a consideration which it has not yet attained. Nature, I think, meant it further distinctions than the washing of linen for a neighbouring market town. The name of projector I do not court, and to attempt to shake the force of ancient custom is often unwise, but sometimes to suggest one thing leads those of maturer judgment to suggest something better. I hope therefore there will be no harm in saying, if we cast our eyes around us, over this side of Westmorland, and indeed some part of Cumberland too, we shall see no place so convenient for the holding a fair as *Round Table*: it would accommodate for that purpose many of the estates of the Earl of Lonsdale and the Earl of Thanet; it would in like manner be a convenience to Carleton Hall, to Brougham Hall, to Askham Hall, to Dalemmain, to Skirsgill, &c. &c. It would be similarly useful to a wide range of villages, to Stainton, Dacre, Soulby, New Church, Pooley, Patterdale, the vallies of

Martindale, Winder, Askham, Helton, Bampton, Knipe, Whale, Lowther, Hackthorp, Melkinthorp, Strickland, Morland, Cliberon, Clifton, Tirril, Sockbridge, Thorp, Yanwath, and many more places that might be enumerated, which certainly shew the flower of the cattle that are exhibited for sale at the fairs of Penrith. The Round Table would be more level, and not so exposed to the inclemency of seasons as the spot set apart for that purpose on Penrith Fell: the storms of the west blow over Round Table, and leave it more untouched than almost any spot that I know of. The fields around Emont Bridge might accommodate the buyers and the sellers before and after market, while the reasonable expences attending such transactions might remain at Emont Bridge, and tend to its improvement.—But ancient custom, and perhaps law, may be against the proposal: there is however, no harm done in mentioning the subject: and our neighbours of Penrith, between whom and us have been an intercourse to mutual advantage, they furnishing us with many articles that we have not, and taking from us the surplus of our farms: I say our neighbours of Penrith, seeing what accommodations we could make for the holding of a Fair for Cattle, may not be unwilling to smooth the surface of theirs; level it they cannot, but to be both rough and hilly, makes it difficult for carts to stand with cows and calves. Another subject I seem inclined to mention to this county and to our neighbouring village, and I cannot see that it will be objected to by either; how far an inclination may arise to come forward on the subject is another thing. This neighbourhood is respectable for persons of fortune: *Agriculture* is the order of the day: and competition promotes excellence. Agricultural

Societies are established in different parts of the Island, but nothing of the kind, that I know of, nearer us than Workington or Kendal. To these places it would be too far to take fine specimens of cattle or sheep. We have heard and read of, *the Knights of the Round Table*; they were famous in British story; I should like to see an order of

The Knights of the Round Table revived,

who have "beat their swords into ploughshares." I should not like to see Round Table again glittering with arms, and ringing with conflicts: but I should like to see a camp of peaceful agriculturists, at stated periods, amicably consulting how the best breed of cattle might overspread our fields, and how they might be fed to the best advantage, the attentive audience all the while laying in a stock of new ideas for future practice, while the young might commence their friendships, and the old renew theirs. But I am not qualified to unfold the subject; I only meant to suggest it.—The little moted plain of *Round Table* is a record of the manners of early times; one likes to preserve these monuments of the different stages of society, as one does to retain the remembrance of the shewy follies of our boyish days: but I should no more like to see two knights hacking one another with their swords and lances, though surrounded by all the elegance and consequence of the times, than I should like to see two poor cocks, whom human ingenuity had made more inveterate, flying at one another with their pointed steel. The manœuvres of battle, I suppose, are as dexterous in the cocks as the men, but chivalry has disappeared in this country, and cock-fighting and bull-baiting, to its credit, are on the decline. As men cultivate their under-

standings and cherish the best affections of the heart, these things will disappear—but the spirit of Christianity, by which men are prepared for a better country, would *totally* root it out for ever. The cutting up of wood is a necessary operation in human affairs, and I would not wish to render more difficult that species of useful labour, but what is done within the ring of Round Table may be done without; then it might be smoothed into a neatness creditable to the neighbourhood, and the whole, by a little pains and a little cost, might become a favourite walk in the summer evenings. This would be adding a little to human enjoyment. It may be thought I have been wandering from the subject, but let it be remembered I am still on the Common, and have had an eye to its improvement.

I have no doubt but that every candid mind will admit, that we are not yet up at the highest point of cultivation: then let us endeavour to make our present land produce one fifteenth or twentieth more than it does at present, we should then have what our Common, if inclosed, would give us, and retain it in at the bargain. I believe we shall not get one acre for every twenty that we have. It was different with *Inglewood Forest*, where, I am told, the Common measured as much as the inclosed land. And here I will own, the progress of cultivation on their sunny hill side, looking towards us, gives me pleasure: the men of fortune in Penrith, very much to their credit, employed a spare capital; but I am told the adjacent cultivators in the back ground, are many of them drooping and disheartened amid their labours, and begin to apprehend the old land will be often neglected, in proportion as the new is improved, so that their gains, will not be so great as was first expected. Nay, I have been inform-

ed, from various quarters, that repentance and disappointment begin to operate on minds that once promoted inclosing, both where commons have lately been divided, and were they are about to divide : this, as our land is fully adequate to the population, ought to make us halt.

Yes, let us stand still, but carry our views a little forward, and suppose about fifty claimants met on Yanwath Moor after the great shares were set apart, and lands disposed of to defray the expences of an application to Parliament, of Commissioners appointed by an act of Parliament, of surveying and dividing, of roads and other unforeseen contingencies, and perhaps that of a law suit to settle the subject of contending rights. These expences must and will be paid, and the Common must shrink in proportion as the bills rise. These points settled and our claimants met, I believe they would look one upon another suprised and disappointed, at the small portion that falls to their share.

Again, let us further suppose those of another class, who have received benefit from the Common met, and looking round them, enter on the subject in something like the following

VILLAGE CONVERSATION.

“ Well, neighbours,” says one, “ we have lost our Common and got little in its stead : they talked of acres, and we have not got roods ; we have all been wrong to suffer ourselves to be overpersuaded. I expected less expence with more advantage than I have received, and I did not think we should have had so great a want of it.” “ I *did* think we should have a *great want of it*,” replies another, “ I always thought we should feel its loss like that of an old friend, who, when he is dead, we remember his good actions,

and with tears in our eyes wish we had valued them more while he lived." "These are true words," says a third, "we cannot now keep a horse in summer to earn a little money, lead turf, or fetch a few coals; we may now sit in winter with small fires." "And another want is," says a respectable farmer, "a free range to water, scarce any of our grassings have water in them. In hot dry weather we used to turn out our young cattle in the morning; at mid day they stood in the moor pond lashing the flies from them with their tails, and in an evening it would have done one good to have seen them waiting for us at the high Moor gate, which, when we had opened, they went quietly back to their pastures; but now, when they go to drink, they are hedged in, and have not room to get away from one another, so they fall to fighting (and we are like to get to fighting too)—one has a horn broke, and another is so thumped on the sides that her calf is killed; there is nothing but humble jumble. "Ah neighbours," says an old man, "while we had our Common we had quiet, and both land and water; our cattle eat the grass, and helped themselves with water, but now they have neither! I see where we are going; those who lived by their labour and a little of their own, will be swept from the earth—Ah! it is a *poor business*."

A man from a neighbouring village hearing what was going on, stopt his horse, and said, Men of Barton! Men of Barton! what have you been about? we always thought you a rather considerate sort of folks; and if one had been at a loss, I will not say but we might have come to ask your advice; but surely you have wanted advice yourselves, or have been unwilling to take it. Looking at your goings on, we

talked about you at our town, and could think of nothing but boys getting round an empty sugar hogshead ; they rush forward, you know, shoulder for shoulder, each anxious to go on, though at bottom, jealous that another gets more than he : some knock their heads together over the sides, one scratches himself on the nails without, another goes headlong into the tub, all is hurly-burly, who can get most, when there is little to be got at all : they lick their lips and their fingers while in the bustle, but they are no fuller when all's over : and I think neither you nor your cattle have been *fuller* for what *you* have gotten." "Yes," said another, that had come up, "we thought you had been the Wise Men of Barton, but you have acted like *the Wise Men of Gotham* ; you know they were for inclosing, and raised a hedge about the Cuckoo, *but she flew over !* your Cuckoo-of-a-Common slips over too ; you may have got hold of her tail, but she flies towards Lowther."

Female sensibility is not less acute than that of our sex, neither is the female character more reserved in disclosing its sentiments ; we will therefore, in like manner, listen to the gathering females around us.

"I liked," says one, "to see our geese come all in a row down the hill, and plunge into the pool, and sip and swim about, they were so happy. And then when our children came home from service at Martinmas, we always had a goose, and it seemed a feast for them." "And," says another, my "husband always let me sell the young geese to buy my daughter and me a new gown against winter ; and you know twenty shillings makes a difference in a poor family." "Aye, but," says a third, "poor folks must not now think of having a goose, the Commons are all taken up,

the geese are gone, and they will be high enough even for the rich to buy them." "I wonder what they ailed at the Common," says a fourth, "it did nobody any harm. You know how our barns scampered over it on a summer evening, and it was good for their health; they now, poor things, may mope in the dusty lane, in danger of being run over by horses, or trodden on by cattle, as they hurry down the turnpike." "No, no," says a fifth, "it did nobody any harm, but some folks cannot see any body have any thing but themselves. I remember the time when we had a cow and a grassing of our own; and how pleasant it was, on a summer morning, to see our cow chew her cud, or eat the apron full of weeds on the green, while I milked her. But let us go home, neighbours: no goose again shall bring forth her green goslings for us, and no cow of ours shall low any more in our hearing."

Perhaps simple village talk has exited levity, we will now let the muse speak a more serious language in

SORROWS

FOR THE COMMON.

Ah! where are the days of our happiness flown,
 When we walk'd o'er the moor as a field of our own;
 Our children, before us, abroad in the sun,
 Pursuing the lambs, or the lapwings' would run:
 Our wives—and 'twas pleasant, went with us to view
 The *whole* of our live stock—a cow and a ewe.
 On the eve of the sabbath, when worn down with care,
 We walk'd the green Common, to breathe the fresh air:
 A thousand long years, even unto this hour.
 To and fro men have walked all over the moor;
 And must the free moor, which our forefathers bore,
 Bear their hapless sons and their daughters, no more?

“ The Common’s a nuisance,” here *selfishness* cries ;
 “ Then the world’s been a nuisance,” cool reason replies ;
 The world was a Common, all blissful and fair,
 Till human transgression brought labour and care :
 By the maker of all things the *Common* was made,
 But man made the *field* with his mattock and spade.

If we read in our bibles, our bibles will show,
 How our Saviour came down to the people below,
 To teach them their duty, and save them from sin,
 By his precepts without, and good spirit within ;
 Thro’ the land of Judea, a pure living stream
 Flow’d forth from his lips—and the poor was his theme ;
 He led them, and fed them, and bless’d them, to prove
 That his kingdom was laid in compassion and love,
 He said—and his sayings the scriptures record,
 “ If you give to the poor, then you lend to the Lord : ”
 Then what must we think of the men who can say,
 We will take from the poor of *their little* away.
 The Lord of Mount Sion, endow’d with such might,
 That Angels and Men must bow down in his sight ;
 Yet so lowly in all things the life which he led,
 That he had not on earth where to lay his meek head :
 Can men, who are full then, “ in basket and store,”
 Wish to wrest their few acres of land from the poor !—
 Up and down in old England, are men to be found,
 Who have the disease of a *longing for ground* ;
 And that longing will never relinquish its hold,
 Till the hand of death gives them, a mouthful of mold.

The Common, that stretches the hamlets between,
 How it offers to all its benevolent green !
 The indigent farmer but opens his door,
 And his horse and his cow, they go on to the moor :
 And where the poor man for his steed cannot pay,
 His half-famish’d beast gets a bait by the way.

Sweet, sweet is the daisy that grows on the moor,
 And sweet is the wild thyme refresh’d by a shower ;
 But sweeter than all, was the milk that was new,
 To the lips of our babes, which from crummy* we drew.

* A name frequently given to a small cow.

The lamb and the ewe, as we went by the way,
 Fed round the green hills thro' the long summer day ;
 Then they gave us their fleeces so woolly and warm,
 To keep us through winter, from cold and from harm—
 No daisy, no wild thyme, no crummy again,
 Or lamb of our *own*, shall be seen on the plain ;
 We shall go by the Common, a tear in our eye,
 Lamenting its loss till the day that we die.

When we pass by your beautiful ground, we behold,
 In autumn, your fields of the colour of gold ;
 But we wish not to take them from man or from woman,
 Then why will you drive us away from the Common ?
 If a whim from its surface, our pottage to boil,
 You will but allow us—we'll give up the soil.*
 By care, and by pain, and the sweat of our brow,
 If ever again we're possess'd of a cow,
 Let the Common continue its succour to give,
 To the end of our days it will help us to live !
 If not, long bemoaning our loss we shall go,
 From the sound of our sorrows you *cannot* withdraw :
 The *Common ! the Common !* so fair to the view,
 Scatter'd over each summer, with cattle anew :
 The *Common ! the Common !* ah ! where is it gone !
 Dull hedges divide it, of stick and of stone :
 We may look o'er the hedges, but must not come there,
 Tho' once we were suffer'd its favours to share :
 By the horse of the rich ones, our poney or cow
 Were permitted to pasture—'tis otherwise now—
 We may look o'er the hedges where once we have been,
 We may *look*, and remember the days we have seen ;
 But land of our own never more shall we have
 Till the mold rattles o'er us, when laid in the grave.

Now, I think this is a fair anticipation of
 public feeling : and I think it better to state
 what is apprehended, while it may be prevented,
 than to withhold, and risk the uneasiness that
 may arise to all parties.

* The usage of digging turf or sod.

Wherever I see the *human form* I respect it, when it is accompanied by an orderly conduct, though possessed of much or little as to the things of this world. A few years more, and what we have here will not make any distinction; what are called the rich or the poor, will be happy or miserable together. It will, therefore, be well for us to remember, that we are going, ere long, into a country where we cannot take our acres and our guineas along with us, and if we could, they would not stand us in any stead; it also further behoves us to consider, if our acres and our guineas are our first beloveds here, we are not fit society for the kingdom of heaven: we have not that kind of affection that would mingle comfortably with the inhabitants of that happy state. It may be said by some that do not know me, I am aiming a blow at the rich; far from it; I could not do so; I have mostly found rich men the most reasonable; I know the laws of kindness often rule in their hearts:—many can testify I have often endeavoured to repress the disposition of murmuring against them, and I may say with justice, their conduct has often been a lesson to me, how I ought to behave to those who may be considered hardly equal to myself: I also fear society would be a sad loser generally, if the rich and the poor were to change places. Yet I do wish, on the present occasion, there was not so much of a pushing the poor man back: it is degrading the human species, and reminds me of what I often see in my cows, when driving them to their grassings; if one that has always been accustomed to give way, advance a little, she is indignantly pushed back by the cow before her: this is the conduct of animals; but we are men—we are rational beings: then let us on this occasion hear the

voice of our poor neighbours. By the poor I do not mean those who have a weekly support from the poor rates, but those that have a little of their own, yet from the pressure of the times, though industrious, can hardly make ends meet. A cottage and two or three acres give them credit, and they pay their taxes, but their capital is perhaps diminishing, and such may draw a little advantage from the Common, which I should not like to have forever annihilated. There are ups and downs in families as well as empires; and those who are now full handed and strenuous for inclosing, their descendants, or childrens children, might at a future period, derive some advantage from an undivided common—perhaps thirty or forty shillings a year, which would keep them off the poor rates. This would have two advantages in it; first, by saving the individuals from what is called, though perhaps unjustly, disgrace; and secondly, it would be a saving of expence to their townships. On the other hand, those that are on the brink of giving way, if their industry is encouraged by their little lean horse, who earns them five pounds a year, feeding a little on the Common, they may keep going on till a promising son, by his management and sagacity, shall redeem the circumstances of his family, and in another generation it may rear its head amongst the foremost in the village. While people have ever so little of their own, it creates a kind of independence, and stimulates exertion; but when that little is quite exhausted, and they are broken down, it is all over with them. On a public question like that before us, men ought not only to look at the present time, but the past and the future. Till lately (when a little hay-ground has been so difficult to rent), several persons in low circum-

stances, kept a cow on the Common, which was a great help to them. That time, if we have patience, may come round again : the unusual quantity of inclosing is likely to glut the market with land, and I should not wonder if, in a little time, a poor person can rent a little hay-ground, and his wife again milk her own cow.

I have been told by a nobleman, who is himself an honour to nobility, and who has seen much of this island, that the peasantry in this neighbourhood, that is in Westmorland and Cumberland, are equal to the yeomanry in other parts of the kingdom, with respect to intelligence ; and that the yeomanry in intelligence rise in a similar proportion. Now this is an advantage and distinction which I should not wish these districts to lose, and I believe it is in a great measure owing to the small divisions of landed property. Those possessed of a few acres have a stake in the country ; with a little industry they are able to give their children something of an education, and they cultivate their own minds. They are able to speak their sentiments, which should ever be, and is often accompanied by a respect for the sentiments of others. If this is in a great degree owing to the small divisions of land, a little Common-right is an auxiliar. But the dividing Commons adds to the larger estates, at the same time it often diminishes the advantages of the small ones ; it may, by sale, put a few pounds, for the present, into the pockets of the proprietors, but in a little time, from the change that has taken place, they are obliged to come to market with their old inheritance ; and as in nature, the greater bodies attract the less, these are added to the domains that surround them, till all the land gets nearly into one hand : and to complete the whole, the

last parcel must be purchased at any price—this will eventually alter, though not improve the character of the country.

I remember once being present at a conversation, when an opinion was given, that if all the men in England were employed in spinning cotton, weaving calicoes, muslins, &c. there would be a market for the articles, and the business could not be outdone: it was one of the many subjects I meet with, in which I was ignorant, and therefore, though I doubted the position, I held my peace. The event, however, proved, that not only the trade might be outdone, but those embarked in it undone. Now it is possible, and to me probable, that the business of inclosing and breaking up land, *may* be outdone also; and that those who embark in it, though they enlarge their estates, may not increase their rents, at least for a long time, nor in proportion to the money expended. Indeed I believe, by-and-by, estates adjoining a little common, will let better than those who have a considerable portion of inclosed common annexed to them.

Though these are subjects new to me, and I have not read books to aid my reflections, yet many things that arise in my mind appear so obvious, that I am willing to hazard them with the reader: and I think I shall not be contradicted by men of experience, when I say, I believe if all the commons and waste lands in England were at this juncture directed, by acts of parliament, to be surveyed, divided, inclosed, and improved, there could not be found funds to carry through the undertaking: or if it were possible to procure funds, it would so embarrass the country, and throw men into such new situations, that things could not go on: the activity

of Old England would be at a stand ; her trades, her manufactories, her ship-building, would stand still : this, the reader will see, would tend to her overthrow. Commons, therefore, should certainly go up gradually and prudently, and those the least likely should be left to the last. This is, no doubt, an enlightened age ; and improvements in science, in agriculture, in building, in roads, in canals, &c. have advanced, within the last fifty years, far beyond that of any former period ; yet the credit of some wisdom is due to our venerable ancestors, and in that relating to the division of land as well as that of other things. We know they divided, in these districts, the land into three compartments. They first set apart for their fields, where each one might know and improve his own ; then for their stinted pastures, where, at no annual expence, they might summer their cattle ; and they left their Common as a public store for future contingencies. And yet, though the rage of inclosing is so general—but if it is a *rage*, it ought to be opposed, for there is no subject on which men ought to be more sober and considerate. I say there are yet large and respectable Commons that lie open, and are likely to lie open, for sheep walks, in the neighbourhood of considerable villages. Being, a few weeks ago, at Melmerby, I fell into conversation with an intelligent person, who I think, said he came from Ousby. I told him they had a fine level Common between Longwathby and Melmerby, and asked him why they did not inclose it. Oh ! said he, this is little to the Common we have. Then I asked him what proportion the Common bore to the inclosed land. He said he wished to be rather within than without, but it was at least ten times as much. I asked him if he meant to say,

that for every ten acres they would get an hundred : he said yes. Now a person with ten or twelve acres there, would get as much land as *all* Yanwath Moor, and yet they do not inclose. This shews the littleness of *our* plan : but I believe if I lived at Ousby I should be for inclosing, though perhaps I might wish to leave, as our forefathers have done, a twentieth part of the Common open.

I think we may safely presume, that it is a general description of Englishmen, who have a cottage and a few acres of their own, and who live by agriculture, that they are attached to the place of their nativity, where they have spent a large portion of their days, and to whose surface, soil, and the objects around them, their habits are formed. Yet in every situation the human character is different : some are men of more exertion, improving their time, and improving every circumstance, till they may be said to have got the better of the world. Others, though not less innocent, are more still, they do not take measures to improve their circumstances ; and if accidents befall, or cross occurrences overtake them, they have not energy to rise above them, and they are sometimes weighed down with encreasing families ; in short, as distinguished from the former, the world is against them. Such sometimes draw a little benefit from the Common ; if taken up, they lose that benefit. If they get a little extension of ground, the inclosing and improving it plunges them deeper in debt ; their former land is less productive, having no return upon it again ; in short, they are obliged to dispose of their *all*. They leave their cottages, never to return ; and their latter days are overshadowed with gloom and despondency —with such I wish others to feel as I do.

I agree with those who think the limits of property ought never to be violated: but the Common is an undivided property, and its division would not enrich the rich, but would make the poor poorer. And what if the limits of an undivided property, to which no one has subscribed, are not very strictly scrutinized? What if the line should wave a little on one side, to one at one time, and to another at another? The *oppressing* of our little Common, or seeking to obtain undue advantage, is dishonourable, especially from those that are not very small occupiers of land themselves; those who can hardly rent a couple of acres any where, and are peaceable and orderly neighbours, the heart must be hard indeed, that could begrudge them a small advantage. The widow's mite, cast into the treasury, was pre-eminently commended by the only perfect Character that ever appeared on earth: and two mites *given* to a poor widow, would be a benefit in a like proportion. We ought not to estimate the consequences of a sum among the different classes of society, as it would be estimated among the money-changers, but in the proportion it bears to the circumstances of the giver or receiver. When from his native Isle the poor Hebridean sent his all, a shilling, to obtain what he conceived his greatest happiness, a wife, he did as much for *him*, as the greatest Potentate does when he sends to a neighbouring Prince a rich embassy to negotiate for a consort to his throne. Let us not always look at the magnitude of the object, but the proportion it bears to those concerned: on the present occasion the object is out of *all* proportion, being great to the little, but little to the great.

Among the pursuits of mankind are those of *individual interest* and of *general good*: the first is

for the support of life, the provision of families, and the comfort of old age, and as such, is laudable and necessary. The latter takes in the advantages of our neighbours along with our own, as such is social and christian. If that of a general good was more in our pursuit, it would widen the limits of human happiness: but the pursuit of individual interest, in opposition to that of general good, must lessen the means of social comfort—as such it is wrong, and the subject under consideration, if further pursued, it is clear to me, will have that tendency. Now, Commons so circumstanced as ours, as to limited extent and numerous claimants, is a *general good*: and to inclose it would be making general good give way to *individual interest*. It is here but justice to state, that I have no doubt in my own mind that the equitable and exalted Character who would receive the largest portion of the inclosed Common, would not wish to have it accompanied by the injury and uneasiness of his humbler neighbours. If this is true, the mischief of the measure must fall fully on ourselves. If that Nobleman, with whose character, in my mind, are united the ideas of clemency and beneficence, and who perhaps, from his estates and seignory, would get half of it, can say, “that he would no longer countenance the measure, and that he would not take any further interest in it,” can those then, who have hitherto been desirous of inclosing, and who would scarce get a fiftieth part of it, do better than follow so generous an example? They would then be looked up to by their neighbours with affection, the cloud that has hung over our villages would disappear, and the sunshine of contentment break forth.

Hospitality, that is entertaining our neighbours or the stranger, has, through all ages been looked

on as one of the most amiable qualities. Such an act would partake of the *spirit* of hospitality. In so doing we should, in effect, entertain our neighbours with some comforts they would otherwise be deprived of, without any intrusion on our time, or other inconvenience. We should all, in fact, partake of what the public table of the Common affords.

I have listened attentively, and it is but fair to do so, to

The Arguments in favour of Inclosing.

As far as I can recollect, they are four or five in number, all of which I shall consider. The first is, that the Common might be rendered more advantageous by inclosing, to those who have the greatest claims thereon. There is something substantial in this, and I think it may apply in favour of about half a dozen : but there is about fifty claimants, therefore the proportion will be as six to forty-four, or about one to eight. The farmers of by far the greatest proportion, take their sheep to the mountains in the spring, and bring them down again after the time called Michælmas, when they have perhaps six weeks pasturage on the Common, with occasional changes thereon, till the return of spring ; this is something : in addition to which, they have the occasional pasturage of idle horses in summer. This statement will also apply to some others in a limited degree, though not to all. I am not unmindful of those who have a respectable property, yet do not draw much good from the Common : let such, however, remember, their lot in this world ought not to be thought hard. Property, when well managed, will always accumulate : but he who is on the borders of poverty, yet draws some advantage from the

Common, if such advantage is taken from him, his loss will be irreparable, and the class just alluded to, will in some degree feel, by an increase of poor rates, which has always been a consequence of inclosing Commons. Causes and effects will always follow one another, though sometimes imperceptibly.

Another argument, and one that has operated on the mind of the Lord of the manor, on that account it becomes us to shew every attention to it, for by his generously enfranchising us our estates, he has been the means of the greatest blessing that has occurred to us in our times. The argument is, that there is hardly a little Common to be met with whose surface has been so much injured by digging of turf: this is an argument that bears on the subject different ways. The wounds inflicted by the spade on the smooth surface of the Common, is injurious to its beauty, like the marks of the small pox to the fair face of the female. Then its dimples disappoint the feeding flocks of their herbage, for years to come; but that is not all, the turf dug up and carried away from the best part of the Common, is a great waste to its soil, and can never again return, thus the estate of the public is injured; but it is a satisfaction to find, that the late prohibitions have put a stop to these depredations; and I have a hope, that as nature repairs the injuries done her, in a little time the wounds on the Common will disappear.

The third argument is, as some think, the inclosure of the Common would improve the appearance of the neighbourhood: this, I own, if made out, would be a bait for me; for I would go as far in my wishes to beautify the country, as any one, but here I doubt the fact. Our Common is situate in the centre of a beautiful

valley ; and if we look around us, from many parts of it, the eye is not immediately checked by fences, but roves, in summer, over a green surface, not darkened and disfigured with brown heath, but enlivened with horses and herds of cattle belonging to different owners, feeding sociably together, and where their owners often meet and converse on the topic of the times. This has something cheering in it, and gives the idea of social freedom full as much as talking in lanes and in fields. Looking over the Common, in whatever direction, we see, at an agreeable distance, sloping Inclosures, with their hedge-row trees ; and more remote, we behold rising woods overtopped by distant mountains : but inclose the Common, and dead fences will come across the eye. If we wait till they are succeeded by thorn hedges, which we cannot see over, what will become of our prospects, which I have heard admired by intelligent strangers, as we walked across the Common ? The nobility and gentry of this country have a correct taste, they throw *down* their hedges, and open their lovely lawns before their castles and country houses. Let us not imitate them, it would not become us ; but without labour and expence we have the lawn of Nature before us, let us retain it. Yanwath Moor is of that character which suits most of us who now enjoy it. I have lived by it since I was a boy, and it suits me.

A fourth argument, I have understood, is, that some want land ; not only the land that will be set apart to them by the division, but they want to buy. This I believe to be honest, but more honest than honourable ; it is like compelling our neighbour to sell part of his estate, that we may buy it. If such, however, want to buy land, let them go on Inglewood Forest, and they

may be accommodated as cheerfully as one of our drapers would be if he now went to Manchester to buy fustian.

The fifth and last argument is the one that has been most frequently used, and is, that by inclosing the Common *we should get quit of the Potters!* It would be difficult to come forward with grave argument in answer to such a ludicrous one, as that we should pull our Common in pieces to get quit of the Potters. However, as we have got hold of the poor Potters, let us keep them a little and treat them kindly, for I believe they are hitherto strangers in print. Society may be said to be a web made up of discordant threads; threads of linen and of woollen, of cotton and of hemp, of silk and of silver, that press close on one another, and make the web strong: but pull out a thread and the web suffers, pull out several and it becomes weak. Potters may be said to be the hemp thread of society;—but to drop the simile, those to whom they are obnoxious, would not get rid of them by taking up the Common, for they would encamp in the lanes, and they *do* encamp in the lanes. It is said they are a nuisance; a rat is a nuisance in a house, but what wise man would pull down his house to get quit of a rat? But they at times exhibit scenes of riot and disorder; this I lament, and would join in endeavouring to suppress such disorder. Public Houses too, exhibit scenes of riot and disorder: ale contributes to this, and has done more harm than all the Potters lodging on all the Commons in England. Yet who would promote an act of parliament to prohibit ale? surely nobody. Ale has done a deal of good, and Potters some. I have seen, five or ten miles from market, the Potters spread their wares on green hills, while the village maids and

matrons gathered round, to become purchasers. I have not investigated the question whether these sort of purchases are made more reasonable at Penrith or by the Black Fells. The villages at the foot of that long chain of mountains, and other villages, are accommodated by these perambulating dealers, and perhaps on as reasonable terms. Then the village matron, far from market, escapes the perplexity and loss that often occur from the stumbling of her horse and the downfall of her basket, or the breakage of her crockery from the breaking of her apron-string. We see differently, and perhaps I have beheld the Potters with other eyes than some of my neighbours. I will own, I have been pleased when I have seen their children running in their shirts, and dashing barefoot through the dew, on a spring morning. I thought I then saw some remaining traces of the hardihood of the ancient Britons, and it was to me at least as gratifying as to see, in a certain district of this county, the gentlemen, on a drizzly morning, hunting with their umbrellas.

We have considered the arguments in favour of inclosing, let us now look at

Some Calculations against Inclosing,

for if the business proceed, it will come to this at last, and we can now do it free of expence; but if we let it go into other hands, it will cost us several guineas a day. And now, I hope that those who are so jealous of individuals, who have not strictly a legal right, coming on the Common for a few days, will allow us to be equally apprehensive of *another* class of persons going with the *whole* for six or seven years; in one case it is but a transient trespass, and all is left the same at the year's end; in the other a

large part of the *principle* is gone, never to return. I have been informed of one or two inclosures now in hand, and not of the first magnitude, each of them hardly a thirtieth part of Inglewood Forest: I say, I have been informed, from authentic sources, that dividing the Common of Long Martyn, with roads, &c. has cost £2400, and that the solicitor's bill was £600, though the claimants were under thirty—our claimants are fifty. I have likewise been told, that to defray the expences of inclosing Newby Common, there has been land sold for £2225, which sum falls considerably short, and that a tax is to be raised, that the commissioner's bill was £663 of the above sum; besides all which, a law suit had cost £440. These circumstances are well known in their neighbourhood, therefore they are no unfair exposures, and they ought to draw our serious attention.

These are public occurrences attending inclosing, I shall briefly mention one or two private ones. A friend of mine lately told me of a person that had just been with him, who had got two acres of inferior land, value £25. per acre, set apart for his share, thus the land stood at £50, and he paid £40. for walling it in—we are now up at £90. and the land yet to improve, what will it have cost him when improved? perhaps, if he sell it, he may give all his land and anxiety, to get hold again of the money he has laid out.

I think it is allowed, that the price of land is not yet on the decline. I was told by the owner of an estate, that he might have had £1700. for it; that he sold his share of Common for £200, and that he can now only have £1000. for the same estate. So much for inclosing in these districts, and now with respect to our own.

I have heard the whole of our Common estimated at 106 acres, but I shall call it 110; I have heard it called more, but that may be the medium. I calculate not from actual admeasurement, but from stepping, from my eye, and to the best of my judgment; if I err, I am not aware on which side it may be.

	<i>Yards.</i>
The Road from Yanwath to Tirril Moor Gate, is -	1300
From the Guide Post to Tirril, - - - - -	1000
Cross Road, from that to Tirril, to that of Askham	550
From Yanwath Moor Gate to near the Guide Post - - - - -	600
From Yanwath Green to Score Gate, - - - - -	350
	3800

These roads measure more than two miles, add to which, the pond near High Moor Gate, and that near Moorside cottages, and the width allowed for such roads in late inclosures, and there will be a deduction from the Common of more than 10 acres; perhaps altogether, with those on Round Table, &c. may amount to 12 acres. The Common will then stand at 98 acres. Out of the roads already mentioned, I find 200 roods of new road to make: from draining and making roads, stones are already become scarce, and much of them will be to quarry for that purpose; hence roads cannot be made for less than 15s. per rood.

	<i>£ s. d.</i>
Making 200 roods will be at least £150.; but those on Round Table, and perhaps an additional price, with other unforeseen contingencies, I think we may say - - - - -	200 0 0
Act of Parliament, with an opposition, Solicitors, &c. can only guess at Commissioners, but for them, their Assistants, dividing stakes, &c. will not be less than	450 0 0
	150 0 0
	£800 0 0

Looking at other inclosures, and considering the circumstances of ours, though I may be sometimes over and sometimes under, yet I do not see how I can rate it under £800. To pay which, if land is sold at 40 guineas an acre, and I think that would be an average price, it takes 19 acres, which brings us down to 79 acres. Then we cannot say less than a sixteenth to the Lord of the Manor for his seignory, which is more than 5 acres, this makes us stand at 74 acres. Perhaps the Lord might then get 34 acres for his estates, which would then leave us 40 acres for 50 claimants. Perhaps five of the claimants might get 10 acres, or two of the claimants 3 acres a-piece, which would be 6 acres; and three of the claimants 1 acre, 1 rood, and not quite 14 perches. We are now down at 30 acres for forty-five claimants; if we should give 30 claimants one acre a-piece, there would be for fifteen claimants

NOTHING.

But I shall here leave it to the accuracy of land surveyors to proportion 30 acres amongst forty-five claimants, not doubting but that each will have his roods, half roods, or quarter roods, duly assigned him, according to his property. We are now among inclosures of a new character, not surely English inclosures, but inclosures in the land of Liliputians. Though calculation is not my talent, I seem inclined to entertain it a little longer, both because a considerable portion of our Common will be converted into hedges instead of corn, and because many of those averse to inclosing, are determined not to part with their portions, if it should take place, but retain them as a memorial of the folly of the

measure. To begin, if a yard square was inclosed it would take four yards of hedge ; if four yards square, which is sixteen yards, was inclosed, it would only take sixteen yards of fence, which is but a quarter of the proportion of inclosing one yard. If twenty yards square is inclosed, which is 400 yards of ground, the length of the hedge is only 80 yards ; and if 100 yards square, which is 10,000 yards, is hedged in, the length of the fence is only 400 yards. I need not go any further with the reader to shew him the folly of inclosing our little Common, with fifty claimants upon it.

Our progress is terminating in that of a subject of calculation. Words and numbers are the signs of things, then let the words *Profit* and *Loss* represent the gainers and losers by the inclosure, and the parties will stand in something like the following proportion :

	Loss
	Loss
	Loss
Profit - - - -	Loss
	Loss
	Loss
	Loss

Thus it will be seen, that this would be an injurious undertaking : but no one can tax me with leaving things worse than I found them, for I only want them to be as they are. If another course is pursued, and it involve the neighbourhood in general injury and uneasiness, which I am persuaded it will, they who pursue it are accountable : others, perhaps, will then remember, how it was faithfully opposed by me.

It will be supposed that the subject on which

I write has given me some concern, but it has something cheering in it to find an encreasing concurrence from those amongst whom I live. Another source of satisfaction is, the support that has been given me by my female neighbours; they have all united with me, one person excepted, and I am glad of such an instance of female independence. Though there are some pursuits that belong peculiarly to us, yet I have always wished the female mind to think for itself—not to be overawed by us, nor yet to be above our advice. The female part of society have certainly more feeling than we, and perhaps we have more firmness; if we should communicate a little of these ingredients to each other, we might both be gainers, and society would go on better for the exchange.

Many arguments still arise on this (to these villages) interesting subject. I could go on for several pages, but the reader will think it time that I should now draw towards a conclusion, which in much goodwill I shall do with saying, that in some parts of the subject I have been rather at a loss when I reflected, that several of those who are so strenuous for inclosing, already possess many beautiful fields of their own, and that what they would get from the Common would not measure one half of *one* of these beautiful fields. Here I could hardly have accounted for their solicitude, but that we all know, when a favourite idea gets possession of the mind, it excludes for a time, at least takes the lead, of all others. This might be illustrated various ways: I am willing to do it in my own individual, and acknowledge, that at different times I have made the experiment of purchasing a field, which to me at the time was desirable, as any part of

the Common could be to any one ; but in a few months, like any other temporal acquisition, it ceased to have any preference or pleasing distinction in my mind. In the nature of things it would be so on the subject in question ; a little acquisition of Common would add but little to any of our happiness, and nothing lasting, we should soon look again on our ancient fields with as much complacency as before ; it would not lighten the pressure of any of our cares, it would not relieve the pain in any of our limbs, it would not add one ray of hope to our prospects of futurity ; then what would it do for us ? The *Common* and the *Grave-yard* are almost the only places that I know of, where the rich and the poor are in partnership together (I hope none wishes their total separation) ; the first appertains to this life, and the last to its close. How different are our pursuits ! some are wishing to dissolve the first : I am labouring with the small power I possess, to preserve it between the parties, as a little pleasing inheritance from him who made the sun, moon and stars, and the earth on which we dwell.

Before I conclude, I wish to say, that I dislike contention exceedingly, it often brings into play the bad dispositions of our nature, and it embitters the few uncertain hours of our short lives, which we ought to employ better. It gives me much concern thus to differ in opinion with some of those with whom I have long acted ; but it is my wish, on all other subjects to give them the right hand of good neighbourhood, and I now solicit that they may feel something of the same for me. Of serious ill-will and its consequences I have no apprehension, for at this

juncture I could sleep as peacefully under any of their roofs as I could do under my own.

I now take my leave: and when I come to take leave of this world, I wish but to descend to the grave with the character of a man of integrity; before my Maker I may appear poor and unworthy. Consistent with the Society I love, and to which I belong, I want no stone at my grave; but if I have a wish to be remembered, when it is forgotten where I am laid, it is for being

the Poor Man's Friend.

THOMAS WILKINSON.

YANWATH,

15th. 1st. Month, 1819.

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